

Return to Use Initiative

2006 Demonstration Project

Clare Water Supply:

Clare, Michigan

THE SITE: The Clare Water Supply site covers significant portions of downtown Clare, and includes the city's municipal wellfield. In 1981, the Clare municipal wells were sampled by the Michigan Department of Public Health, revealing volatile organic compound contamination in two wells. In 1982, soil samples from the industrial area west of the municipal wellfield were also found to be contaminated. Cleanup activities at the site began in 1991 and included wellhead treatment of municipal well water, encapsulation and treatment of contaminated soils both on and off-site, active ground water restoration, and implementation of institutional controls to restrict the use of the aquifer until the ground water meets drinking water standards. A containment cell for in-situ encapsulation of contaminated soils was established on the Ex-Cell-O property, a 2.86-acre parcel located within the site's northern boundaries along U.S. Highway 10. Remedy construction was completed in 1999. Ground water monitoring continues to ensure that contaminated ground water migration is under control. The containment cell and an adjacent uncontaminated area to the east of the cell have been enclosed by a chain link fence to prevent access to the encapsulated soils.

THE OPPORTUNITY: The site is in the downtown area of Clare, and the Ex-Cell-O property is well-situated along the commercial corridor of U.S. Highway 10. The containment cell, approximately one acre in size, is centrally located within the Ex-Cell-O property and is surrounded by two uncontaminated areas, a 0.75-acre area located west of the cell and a 1.5-acre area located east of the cell. The City of Clare has expressed interest in the redevelopment of the Ex-Cell-O property for commercial and recreational uses; these types of uses would be consistent with the property's light industrial zoning.

THE BARRIER: The property is privately owned. The city may work with the current owner to transfer the property to municipal ownership. The city would then need to resolve liability issues in order to move forward with the redevelopment. The main obstacles to the reuse of the Ex-Cell-O property are the inclusion of the uncontaminated areas within the site boundaries, the location of the monitoring wells, and the fencing around the containment cell and the adjacent uncontaminated area east of the cell.



Barriers:

Two uncontaminated areas are unnecessarily stigmatized by being included within the site boundaries, impeding their reuse and raising future liability concerns

Solution:

Remove the uncontaminated areas from the site definition; various Superfund redevelopment tools to lessen liability concerns



Before:

Underutilized portion of a Superfund site in a growing commercial district

After:

Advantageous location for commercial redevelopment

THE SOLUTION: EPA provided services to the City of Clare to develop strategies for eliminating the barriers to reuse. EPA has provided the community with in-kind service resources to identify and discuss reuse barriers at the site. This effort could help the community develop strategies leading to protective and available future uses. In addition, should the property ownership be transferred, EPA hopes to coordinate with Michigan Department of Environmental Quality to review bona fide prospective purchaser (BFPP) requirements with a "reasonable steps" letter. This letter would describe conditions for maintaining liability exemptions as a BFPP including any continuing obligations and reasonable steps that the property owner must satisfy to exercise "due care" at the site. These tools can facilitate transfer of the property by clarifying potential liability concerns. In September 2006, EPA developed the second Five-Year Review report for the site, using the reuse planning report as a source of information regarding likely future uses of the land. EPA is also exploring opportunities to remove the uncontaminated parcels from within the site's boundary.

THE SITE NOW: The Ex-Cell-O property was assessed at \$36,000 in 2007 and generates close to \$900 in annual tax revenues. Commercial or industrial development of the uncontaminated areas of the property is expected to further increase the property value and generate additional tax revenues for the city.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT: Tom Bloom, Region 5 Superfund Redevelopment Coordinator, at (312) 886-1967 or bloom.thomas@epa.gov.



Portions of the Clare Water Supply Superfund site remain underutilized after the cleanup. The site is located near the downtown area of Clare, and the Ex-Cell-O property of the site (shown here) is well-situated along the commercial corridor of U.S. Highway 10 (to the right of the property).